



## **EQUAL HEALTH:** **Monthly Informer**

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### **DO YOU KNOW YOUR NUMBERS? YOUR HEART & BRAIN MAY BE AT RISK!**

High Blood Pressure (HBP) is the Leading Cause of Heart Disease and Strokes  
among Blacks and Hispanics in the United States.

**Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences**  
**Center for Health Disparities Research & Education**  
*Community Outreach & Information Dissemination Core*

Centers of ~~EX~~cellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on  
Health Disparities, and Training program (Project EXPORT)

# Hypertension

## **Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Chronic Kidney Disease**

Hypertension is more common and more severe among Blacks of all ethnic origins and Hispanics of all races. About 2 in 5 African Americans are hypertensive, as are 1 in 5 Hispanics and Native Americans, and 1 in 6 Asians.

Each year more Blacks and Hispanics than non-Hispanic Whites, die from complications of hypertension. The most catastrophic complications of untreated hypertension include heart attacks, hemorrhages in the brain (Strokes) and severe damage to the kidneys. Scientists are starting to investigate why these differences occur among persons of different races. Studies suggest that there are many possible causes for these disparities. Some factors are believed to be inherited from our parents, other factors seem to be related to where and how we live, and still others seem to be related to both, our inheritance and the environment.

## **What is HYPERTENSION?**

Hypertension is the condition of having an abnormally high blood pressure. Hypertension is commonly referred to as High Blood Pressure and it is abbreviated as HBP or HTN.

## **What is normal blood pressure?**

Blood pressure refers to how strong your blood pushes against the wall of the arteries as the heart beats. The pressure inside the arteries in your arm is usually measured during a medical

examination by health care professionals. The measurement of the blood pressure is expressed in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) and reported using two numbers written as a fraction. These numbers represent your blood pressure level. The normal blood pressure is **120/80 mm Hg** or lower. Do you know your numbers?



**How high above 120/80 mmHg is the Blood Pressure considered abnormally high?**  
Any blood pressure value higher than 120/80 mmHg must be

Taken seriously and carefully evaluated by a health care professional. The significance of the actual numbers will depend on several factors, including the presence of a medical condition such as diabetes.

### **What is the best treatment of Hypertension?**

The treatment of hypertension depends on how high the numbers are, whether you have any chronic condition or illness, and whether you engage in certain risk behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol or not exercising regularly. Many factors influence our blood pressure level making it necessary to have a complete medical examination, a careful review of a personal, family and medical history and the performance of some laboratory tests to decide the best treatment of hypertension.

### **Can Hypertension be Cured?**

The cause of almost every case of hypertension in persons of any race or ethnicity is unknown and for the

majority hypertension represents a chronic condition that is only controlled with medications but not really cured. The most important aspect of good treatment is maintaining your blood pressure at or below 120/80 mmHg. It is absolutely critical for every hypertensive person to follow the treatment plan prescribed by his or her health care provider and know his or her numbers.

### **Complications of Hypertension can be prevented**

The only way to prevent the complications of HBP: heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure, are maintaining blood pressure at normal levels with a carefully designed management plan. If your numbers are not 120/80 mmHg, ask your health care provider to explain why they are not. Ask if he or she has a plan to try to bring your blood pressure to 120/80 mmHg or lower levels.

### **Can you tell if you have Hypertension?**

Absolutely not. That is why hypertension has been considered a silent killer. The only way to find out if your blood pressure is abnormally elevated is having it measured by a qualified health worker or your health care provider. You may be trained by your health care provider to measure your own blood pressure as part of your treatment or management plan.

### **Preventing Heart attacks, Stroke and kidney disease**

Having your blood pressure measured at least once a year is the best way to identify the early

onset of hypertension. Early recognition of hypertension is the best way to prevent the complications of heart attacks, strokes and kidney disease.

### **You can help control your Hypertension**

Important initial steps to control hypertension include eating a low-salt, low-saturated-fat diet, getting 30–60 minutes of physical activity on most or all days and limiting your alcohol intake. If these lifestyle changes don't get your blood pressure down to a normal level, you may require a prescription for a blood-pressure-lowering medication.

### **Do you want to learn about hypertension?**

The web site of the American Heart Association (AHA) is an excellent source of information on hypertension and on ideas to help you become an active participant the management of your hypertension. The site includes spoken material, music, animated images and many other forms of information. You can access the Hypertension section of the AHA Website by typing the following web address on your internet browser:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2114>

For more information about the racial and ethnic disparities in hypertension you can visit the Website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the following Internet address:

[http://www.cdc.gov/cvh/library/fs\\_bloodpressure.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cvh/library/fs_bloodpressure.htm)

## Mission of the Center

The Uniformed Services University Center for Health Disparities Research and Education (USUCHD) aims to promote health-related change and ultimately reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities through research, education, training, and community outreach and information dissemination.

## Community Outreach and Information Dissemination Core

The core's general objective is to actively involve community partners in research, training opportunities, and educational offerings to maximize the understanding and reduction of health disparities in minority populations. This broad objective is achieved through multiple activities, including the extraction, synthesis and compilation of relevant materials and information from the other primary EXPORT Center Components. The activities respond to specific operational objectives established each year in response to the accumulated experience of the community outreach team, the health concerns and needs of our community partners and the Community Based Organization with whom we work collaboratively to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities.

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